UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1994/39
4 January 1994

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fiftieth session
Item 11 of the provisional agenda

FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Human Rights Education

Report of the Secretary-General on action taken in relation to the declaration of a decade for human rights education

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
Introduction		1 - 3	2
I.	The World Conference on Human Rights	4 - 19	2
	A. Action taken prior to the World Conference	4	2
	B. Action taken during the World Conference	5 - 10	3
	C. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action	11 - 15	4
	D. Action taken after the World Conference	16 - 19	5
II.	THE PRESENT AND FUTURE ROLE OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION	20 - 28	6
III.	PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION FOR A UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION	29 - 32	8
Annex:	Comments by UNESCO on Commission resolution 1993/56, "Education and human rights"		10

GE.94-10011 (E)

Introduction

1. In its resolution 1993/56 of 9 March 1993, the Commission on Human Rights called upon States to step up their efforts to eradicate illiteracy and to ensure that the entire population has access to all-round education as an essential element of development. It supported the efforts of States that have already initiated human rights education processes in the formal system of education; called upon States that have not yet done so to join in efforts to introduce all-round education as a matter of high priority, and to include within it the subject of human rights; and recommended that knowledge of human rights, both in its theoretical dimension and practical application, should be established as a priority in educational policies. It also recommended that, in devising such policies, particular account should be taken of the multi-ethnic character of the various societies and of respect for the identity and needs of groups such as minors, women, indigenous persons, racial minorities, the disabled and others.

2. The Commission on Human Rights recognized the contribution made by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to the new human rights education process in States in the field of both formal and non-formal education. It urged all governmental and non-governmental educational agencies to coordinate their efforts so as to give their initiatives greater impact, and urged international agencies for financial and technical cooperation to include support for human rights education programmes as well as programmes for the promotion of literacy and to allocate funds for the realization of these programmes.

3. In the same resolution, the Commission on Human Rights recommended that the General Assembly take the appropriate measures to declare a decade for human rights education in the light of the recommendations of the International Congress on Education and Democracy of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, held at Montreal, Canada, from 8 to 11 March 1993. The Commission also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its fiftieth session, a detailed report on action taken in relation to the declaration of a decade for human rights education. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request.

I. THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

A. Action taken prior to the World Conference

4. At its conclusion, the International Congress on Education and Democracy adopted a World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy. The Plan of Action seeks to provide the widest possible range of information on all matters relating to human rights through a variety of means including, inter alia, education systems, documentation and the United Nations machinery. The Plan of Action also seeks to make the largest possible number of protagonists and decision-makers aware of the means and the implications of educational action for human rights and democracy. The report of the Conference was circulated at the World Conference on Human Rights (A/CONF.157/PC/42/Add.6). Information on the Plan of Action may be found in the communication from the Director-General of UNESCO which is annexed to the present report.

B. Action taken during the World Conference

5. The World Conference on Human Rights was convened at Vienna in June 1993. The issue of human rights education was a major point of discussion at all stages of the preparatory process as well as during the Conference itself. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the conclusion of the Conference (see sect. III below) is itself a clear reflection of the importance attached to human rights education by the States and the intergovernmental, national and non-governmental organizations represented at the World Conference.

6. During the Conference a number of meetings were held which addressed the matter of human rights education. The first of these was a meeting of chairpersons and representatives of the international human rights treaty bodies (the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the European Commission and the European Court of Human Rights, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, the Inter-American Commission and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the ILO Committee on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations represented by the International Labour Office).

7. A number of participants felt that the World Plan of Action adopted at Montreal in the March 1992 conference failed to specify the obligations of States with regard to human rights education. In their statement to the World Conference (A/CONF.157/TBB/4 and Add.1), the participants pointed out that the effective performance of their obligations by States parties requires that concerted efforts be made to educate their citizens and others about their rights and that education on human rights and for democracy is an essential element of an overall human rights strategy. The participants called upon States parties to ensure that human rights training is provided on a systematic and continuing basis to State and other relevant officials. Officials of all relevant international agencies also needed to be trained in human rights, particularly those involved in development cooperation, peace-keeping and election monitoring.

8. On the basis of the interest expressed in human rights education by representatives of the treaty bodies, the secretariat of the World Conference decided to call an informal, ad hoc meeting of members of United Nations treaty bodies and officials of the relevant sectors of the United Nations Secretariat and the specialized agencies to pursue this matter further - both generally, and within the specific context of calls for the proclamation of an international decade for human rights education. The idea of such a decade was favourably received by participants in this meeting who also stressed the need for increased and improved cooperation within the United Nations Secretariat and with other intergovernmental organizations on the issue of human rights education.

9. A number of suggestions were put forward at this meeting regarding priorities and strategies for the United Nations with respect to human rights education. Participants stressed the need to increase legal literacy to a level which would permit individuals and groups to enjoy fully and exercise the rights to which they are entitled. Such training, it was agreed, would be particularly important for those countries which lack a strong legal or judicial tradition and/or with few trained lawyers.

10. Participants at the ad hoc meeting recommended that a long-term, comprehensive evaluation be undertaken to ascertain how human rights may be effectively and appropriately integrated into all societies. Such an evaluation would require consideration of differing political, cultural and social contexts in order to ensure that human rights education is suited to the particular needs of individual countries. Participants also stressed the complementary strengths of the various United Nations agencies and sectors of the United Nations Secretariat directly or indirectly involved in human rights education and called for greater harmonization and cooperation between the different programmes.

C. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

11. In its Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the World Conference on Human Rights reaffirmed that, in accordance with international instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, States are duty-bound to ensure that education is aimed at strengthening the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education should promote understanding, tolerance, peace and friendly relations between the nations and all racial or religious groups and encourage the development of United Nations activities in pursuance of these directives. The Conference affirmed that education on human rights and the dissemination of proper information, both theoretical and practical, play an important role in the promotion and respect of human rights for all; and that this should be integrated in the education policies at both the national and international levels.

12. The World Conference declared human rights education training and public information to be essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious actions among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. It called on States to strive to eradicate illiteracy, to direct education towards the full development of the human person and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also called upon States and institutions to include human rights, humanitarian law, democracy and the rule of law as subjects in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and non-formal settings.

13. The World Conference recommended that States develop specific programmes and strategies for ensuring the widest human rights education and the dissemination of public information, taking into account the World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy, as well as other human rights instruments and taking particular account of the human rights needs of women.

14. The World Conference called for a strengthening, in this field, of the World Public Information Campaign on Human Rights carried out by the United Nations. The advisory services and technical assistance programmes of the United Nations system should, in its opinion, be able to respond immediately to requests from States for educational and training activities in the field of human rights as well as for special education concerning standards as contained in international human rights instruments and in humanitarian law and their application to special groups such as military forces, law enforcement personnel, police and the health profession.

15. The World Conference also stated that the proclamation of a United Nations decade for human rights education should be considered in order to promote, encourage and focus the above-mentioned educational activities.

D. Action taken after the World Conference

16. In order to assess needs and requirements in the field of human rights education generally, and the decade for human rights education in particular, the Centre for Human Rights has taken a number of preliminary steps. The first of these was to contact the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization transmitting resolution 1993/56 of the Commission on Human Rights and requesting information on the matters raised in that resolution. The reply of the Director-General outlined the areas in which UNESCO has been focusing its human rights education efforts. These include promotion of normative action; preparation, dissemination and implementation of action plans for the development of human rights education; preparation of guidelines for various target audiences involved in the educational process including teacher-trainers and those responsible for curriculum development; preparation of teaching materials for various levels and forms of education; and promotion of international and regional networks of educational and research institutions dealing with education for peace and human rights. Information was also provided on the World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy. The full text of the Director-General's reply is reproduced in the annex.

17. The Centre for Human Rights then followed up the interest expressed in human rights education by the chairpersons of the various human rights treaty bodies. All chairpersons were contacted by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and asked for guidance and practical suggestions from their Committee on, inter alia, which rights should be selected for the purpose of human rights education, training and information; what criteria should be adopted to select projects submitted by States; and what professions or groups should be selected for priority consideration in human rights education, training and information.

18. On 3 December 1993, a representative of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights addressed the European Conference to launch the Decade for Human Rights Education at Rome. The initiative to inaugurate a European Decade for Human Rights Education may well prove to be extremely valuable in focusing and coordinating human rights education activities.

19. Also in December, and pursuant to the above-mentioned statement on behalf of the Assistant Secretary-General on the subject, a meeting was organized between the Centre for Human Rights and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to discuss human rights education. Members of the Committee were asked for their practical suggestions on how those parts of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action dealing with human rights education could be implemented. The proposed United Nations decade for human rights education was also discussed in view of the fact that plans for implementing the Vienna Declaration with respect to human rights education would also be able to contribute to plans for an eventual decade for human rights education. As a result of these discussions, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights decided to organize its general discussion at its next session around human rights education and promotion of knowledge of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The general discussion will be organized and conducted on as broad a base as possible with participation encouraged from relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. Mrs. Virginia Bonoan-Dandon, member of the Committee, was nominated to be the focal point for preparing the discussions and to prepare a paper with the assistance of the secretariat. The Committee requested the secretariat to provide it with up-to-date information on current activities and initiatives in the field of human rights education and to prepare a survey of existing sources of information on human rights education.

II. THE PRESENT AND FUTURE ROLE OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

20. The Centre for Human Rights has for many years been involved in human rights education, principally through its information programme and the advisory services and technical assistance programme. In the past few years, the scope of the Centre's educational activities has expanded considerably and strategies are currently being developed in order to ensure that a comprehensive, effective programme is in place in order to take full advantage of the impetus provided by the World Conference and the proclamation of a United Nations decade for human rights education.

21. The activities of the Centre for Human Rights in the field of human rights education may be conveniently divided into two categories according to the respective target audiences. In the first category are activities aimed at educating the general, non-specialist public about the rights to which they are entitled and the mechanisms which exist to enforce those rights. Education of this group is primarily by way of publications, briefings, exhibitions, translation of the international human rights instruments into local languages, contacts with non-governmental and community organizations and other external relations activities. Additional information may be found in the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights on development of public information activities in the field of human rights including the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights, (E/CN.4/1994/36).

22. Into the second category of educational and training activities undertaken by the Centre for Human Rights fall all those projects directed towards professional groups. As part of its programme of advisory services and technical assistance, the Centre has organized training courses in the

administration of justice for judges, lawyers, prosecutors, law enforcement personnel, military and prison officials. In addition, targeted programmes have been developed for primary and secondary school teachers, trainers, inspectors and directors; the media; non-governmental organizations; and governmental officials involved in human rights at the national level. In all training situations, a collegial approach is adopted whereby participants are instructed by persons with practical knowledge in the relevant field. In order to maximize the effect of its professional training and educational activities, the Centre for Human Rights has begun to publish a series of training manuals specifically designed to respond to the particular needs of each professional audience. Additional information on these activities may be found in document E/CN.4/1994/78.

23. The Centre for Human Rights is currently in the process of identifying additional target audiences for human rights training and education. In accordance with directives contained in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, one such group will be international civil servants - particularly those involved in peace-keeping operations or the provision of development assistance.

24. The Centre is also exploring ways in which to maximize the effectiveness of its education and training activities. The first step in this regard is to obtain detailed information on the needs of individual States and to undertake an assessment of how these needs may best be met. The assistance of the treaty-monitoring bodies will be crucial in this respect and their recommendations made in response to the communication referred to in paragraph 17 above will be carefully considered. It will also be necessary to request information from individual States as to what activities are currently being undertaken in the field of human rights education. In order to ensure its completeness, such a survey could be undertaken with the assistance of teachers' associations and trade unions, professional groups and non-governmental organizations.

25. Reference in this regard may be made to Commission resolution 1990/66, entitled "Human rights in times of armed conflict", in which the Commission, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to request information from all Governments on the scope of education provided to the police and the armed forces. An analytical review of the replies received was submitted to the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities at its forty-third session (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/5). In view of the emphasis placed in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on educating about human rights and humanitarian law, particularly for police and security forces, the Commission on Human Rights may wish to initiate follow-up to the work already undertaken in pursuance of resolution 1990/66.

26. On the basis of information received on the worldwide state of human rights education, the contents of the proposed plan of action (see sect. III below), and in the light of the views of Governments as well as those of the treaty-monitoring and other human rights bodies, States will be encouraged to develop individual plans of action for human rights education. These action plans can be developed in conjunction with, or form part of the national plans

of action on human rights requested by the World Conference on Human Rights. The year 2005, the last year of the proposed United Nations decade, could be set as a target date for achieving generalized human rights education programmes through implementation of State action plans.

27. Support could be given to activities undertaken in pursuance of this goal by establishing, on both the national and subregional levels, centres or institutes for human rights education and training. The United Nations may also provide expert assistance to States in the development and implementation of action plans for human rights education. States should also be encouraged to utilize the expertise of non-governmental organizations active in the field of human rights education.

28. Parallel to the national assessments, an international assessment should be conducted to review the effectiveness of present international education, training and public information activities and institutions. The international assessment would ascertain the level and nature of existing resources and evaluate their effectiveness. A renewed and reinvigorated programme of human rights education could be developed on the basis of this international assessment. The entire national and international assessment procedure should be undertaken with a view to creating a comprehensive database on human rights education in order to facilitate both communication and improvement.

III. PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION FOR A UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

29. In its resolution 48/127, the General Assembly, inter alia, urged both governmental and non-governmental educational agencies to intensify their efforts in human rights education, as recommended in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The Assembly noted the plan of action presented to the International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy and recommended that Governments and non-governmental organizations consider the plan in preparing national plans for human rights education. It also requested the Commission on Human Rights, in cooperation with Member States, human rights treaty-monitoring bodies, other appropriate bodies and competent non-governmental organizations to consider proposals for a United Nations decade for human rights education, which should be incorporated by the Secretary-General into a plan of action for such a decade and submitted, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session with a view to the proclamation of a decade for human rights education.

30. The General Assembly also requested the Commission on Human Rights to consider, in cooperation with Member States, human rights treaty-monitoring bodies and appropriate bodies and non-governmental organizations, proposals for a United Nations decade for human rights education and to submit, through the Economic and Social Council, a plan of action for such a decade, to be proclaimed by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

31. In the same resolution, the General Assembly called upon international, regional and national non-governmental organizations, and in particular those concerned with women, labour, development and the environment, as well as

other social justice groups, human rights advocates, educators, religious organizations and the media, to increase their involvement in human rights education and to cooperate with the Centre for Human Rights in preparing for a United Nations decade for human rights education.

32. The information contained in the present report, together with the suggestions which have been made for enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations in the field of human rights education, may serve as a useful basis for the preparation by the Commission on Human Rights of the plan of action requested by the General Assembly.

ANNEX

Comments by UNESCO on Commission resolution 1993/56, "Education and human rights"

Education for human rights has always been one of the main priorities in UNESCO's programme and budget, the programme actions being recently developed along the following lines:

(i) Normative action: promotion of the full and comprehensive implementation of the Recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms (Paris, 1974), in particular through the permanent system of reporting by Member States and the Consultative Committee of experts representing all regions of the world;

(ii) preparation, dissemination and implementation of action plans for the development of human rights education, including the Integrated Action Plan adopted by UNESCO's General Conference at its twenty-sixth session (October-November 1991) as "a flexible and open-ended preliminary framework for initiating action designed to integrate peace and human rights education" and the World Action Plan on Education for Human Rights and Democracy adopted by the International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy (March 1993);

(iii) preparation of guidelines for educational authorities, teacher trainers, teachers, curriculum designers, textbook authors, including guidelines on values education, in particular those relating to peace, tolerance, human rights and democracy and guidelines on revision and improvement of curricula, textbooks, teaching materials and teacher training programmes from the viewpoint of education for peace, human rights and democracy (UNESCO, 1993);

(iv) preparation of teaching materials for various levels and forms of education including an International Practical Guide on the implementation of the 1974 Recommendation (UNESCO, 1992), a manuscript entitled "Education Art Booklet on Human Rights" (which UNESCO intends to propose for publication in consultation with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights), and "La culture démocratique. Contributions du système des écoles associées de l'UNESCO" (1993);

(v) promotion of international and regional networks of educational and research institutions dealing with education for peace and human rights, including the Associated Schools Project established in 1953 and now comprising more than 3,000 educational institutions in 116 UNESCO member States and UNESCO's International Textbook Research Network set up in 1992 with a view to promoting exchanges

of innovative experience on textbook research, encouraging international cooperation in this field and activating the improvement of textbooks dealing with problems of peace, human rights and democracy;

(vi) widening of access to representative works of cultural minorities through the recent UNESCO Video Collection of Minority Cultures, focusing in the 1994-1995 biennium on China and the member States of the former USSR;

(vii) upon request by new member States increase of regional consultations in regions of potential cultural conflicts;

(viii) assistance for the establishment of a network of cultural institutions specializing in the study of cultural identities;

(ix) within the framework of the United Nations Year for Tolerance (1995) promotion of cultural expressions of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

All these UNESCO tools for the development of human rights education as an integral part of education for international and intercultural understanding, peace, solidarity and cooperation can and will be actively used for the furtherance of actions at all levels and in all forms of the educational process within the framework of a decade for human rights education.

The International Congress on Human Rights Teaching, Information and Documentation (Malta, September 1987) proposed the recommendation of a "World Decade for Human Rights Education Advancement". The World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy (Montreal, March 1993), inter alia, is based on the Malta Congress's recommendations.

This Plan of Action seeks by various means (education systems, networks, documentation, meetings, United Nations machinery and funds, etc.) to provide the widest possible range of information on all matters relating to human rights, and to make the largest possible number of protagonists and decision-makers aware of the means and of the implications of educational action for human rights and democracy in order to maximize the likelihood that societies will at last develop in which all individuals and groups settle their differences in non-violent ways. As the Director-General declared at the Vienna Conference, UNESCO trusts "that the relevance of this Plan of Action will be recognized here and that it can be incorporated, in particular, in the programme of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, the proclamation of which has our support".